



# How the EUB Responds to Utility Customer Service Complaints



## **About This Guide**

This guide answers common questions about regulated utilities, how to make a formal complaint to the EUB about your utility service, and how we handle your concerns.

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## **Contact Information**

If you would like general information or assistance with filing a complaint, please contact us at:

EUB Utilities Branch  
10th floor, 10055 – 106 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2Y2  
Telephone: (780) 427-4901\*  
Fax: (780) 427-6970

If you need more information or assistance with a specific utility application, please contact us at:

EUB Utilities Branch  
5th floor, 640 – 5 Avenue SW  
Calgary, Alberta T2P 3G4  
Telephone: (403) 297-3590\*  
Fax: (403) 297-6104

\* See footnote on page 6.



# **PART 1: The EUB's Role in Regulating Utilities**

## **What the EUB is**

We are the provincial agency that regulates utility rates and service and energy resource development, such as oil, natural gas, pipelines, oil sands, and coal.

## **What the EUB regulates**

We regulate a wide range of electric and gas utilities. However, ongoing deregulation has affected many aspects of utility regulation.

## **Electric utilities**

The EUB continues to set customer rates during the transition to retail competition in the electric industry, scheduled to start on 1 January 2001. After that date, residential customers may remain on an EUB-regulated rate for a further 5-year period or choose to purchase electric service from the retailer of their choice at rates determined in the marketplace. (However, these rates will include charges for transmission and distribution of power, which continue to be price regulated by the EUB.) Additionally, the EUB will continue to be responsible for ensuring customers receive safe, adequate service.

## **Regulated companies include**

- TransAlta Utilities Corporation, which supplies most electricity in southern and central Alberta, and
- ATCO Electric (formerly known as Alberta Power Limited), which serves customers in northern and eastern Alberta.

## **Natural gas**

Under deregulation, most consumers have the option to purchase natural gas from the supplier of their choice. However, the EUB continues to regulate

- ATCO Gas (formed from the merger of Northwestern Utilities Limited and Canadian Western Natural Gas Company Ltd.), which distributes gas to most of the province,
- AltaGas Utilities Inc. (formerly known as Centra Gas Utilities Inc.), which operates in smaller communities throughout the province,

- Bonnyville Gas Limited, which operates in the Town of Bonnyville, and
- Orr Mineral Developments Ltd., which operates only in Suffield, Alberta.

### **Water utilities**

CU Water Limited serves communities east of Edmonton and is regulated by the EUB.

### **Milk pricing**

Under the Dairy Board Act, the EUB sets the minimum price of milk paid to producers.

## **PART 2: Making a Complaint About Your Utility Service**

*If you have one of the following concerns...*

- Your utility service has been disconnected or you are having other problems with your service.
- You believe a utility company has made a mistake in your billing.
- You have questions about installation costs, security deposits, or late-payment penalties.
- You don't agree with new rates a utility is proposing.
- You have questions about your level of service or impending industry deregulation.

*...what should you do?*

Although EUB staff can help with these matters, **it is best to first contact your utility company.**

### **Making a formal complaint to the EUB**

If you are not satisfied with the response of your utility company, please contact the EUB by telephone, letter, or fax, detailing the nature of the issue, the facts surrounding the complaint, and the action you would like. We will also respond to complaints submitted by e-mail to **Utilities.Concerns@eub.gov.ab.ca**. Please note that complaints need to be in writing to proceed to a more formal review level at the EUB.



## **To lodge a complaint about your utility rates or service, contact:**

EUB Utilities Branch  
10th floor, 10055 – 106 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2Y2  
Telephone: (780) 427-4901\*  
Fax: (780) 427-6970

## **What happens to your complaint?**

EUB staff will let you know by letter that the EUB has received your written complaint. If we do not need an explanation from the utility in question, we will send you information directly from our office. However, usually we first contact the utility and have it report back on your inquiry. We will then review the utility's response and contact you by letter, explaining our findings. Sometimes, a public hearing may be required to resolve the complaint.

It is important to understand that the EUB's authority to deal with your complaint is limited to certain legislated powers. By and large, this means the terms, conditions, and rates under which the utility provides services to its customers. In some situations, your dispute may be beyond the Board's jurisdiction and you may have to take the matter to court for resolution.

## **Whom should you contact with complaints outside EUB jurisdiction?**

Not all utility-type services are regulated by the EUB. This list indicates whom to contact for these services:

- For questions about **power service interruptions**, contact your local utility company directly.
- For concerns about **municipally owned utilities**, contact your local service provider or your local council members or mayor. The EUB has only limited authority over municipally owned utilities.

EUB authority over these utilities is restricted to investigating specific complaints when a consumer believes rates are discriminatory, improperly imposed, or fail to conform to the rate structure established by the municipality.

\* See footnote on page 6.

- For information on **natural gas marketers**, contact:  
 Alberta Government Services  
 Consumer Services Division  
 In northern Alberta, call (780) 427-4088\*  
 In southern Alberta, call (403) 297-5700\*
- For concerns about **natural gas co-operatives**, contact the co-op manager or directors or the Rural Utilities Branch at the following address:  
 Rural Utilities Branch  
 Department of Resource Development  
 North Tower, Petroleum Plaza  
 9945 – 108 Street  
 Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2G5  
 Telephone: (780) 427-0125\*

*Please note:* The EUB does have a limited complaint authority over natural gas co-ops. It may hear complaints about terms of service, service charges, and rates or tolls when a customer thinks they are discriminatory, improperly imposed, or fail to conform to the co-op's established rate structure. Anyone wishing to receive gas co-op services can file a complaint with the EUB if that service is not provided. These complaints must be sent by registered mail to both the EUB's Chair and to the Chief Officer of the Rural Utilities Branch.

- For **telecommunications utilities**, such as telephone and cable television services, contact:  
 Canadian Radio-Television and  
 Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)  
 Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2  
 Telephone: (819) 997-0313
- For **Rural Electrification Associations (REAs)**, contact the directors of the specific REA or:  
 The Federation of REAs  
 165 Seneca Road  
 Sherwood Park, Alberta T8A 4G6  
 Telephone: (780) 417-3396

\* See footnote on page 6.



## **PART 3: When Your Complaint Cannot Be Resolved**

When a utility-related complaint cannot be resolved, the EUB may schedule a hearing in your area to thoroughly review the issue.

### **EUB Hearings**

A hearing is the traditional tool used by the EUB to reach a decision when issues cannot be resolved. It provides all parties involved with the important opportunity to publicly express their views in a fair and orderly forum, as in a court of law.

The EUB may publish a Notice of Hearing in local newspapers. In response to a notice, anyone with concerns about the issue may submit their views in writing to the EUB. Anyone wishing to do so will become an intervener. A written submission (or intervention) is usually a letter or report that clearly outlines your views and concerns about the issue. Interveners may include groups or associations who wish to present a collective point of view.

As an applicant or intervener, you may choose to represent yourself at the hearing or be represented by a lawyer. In either case, EUB staff will be available to assist you with any procedural questions.

### **The Decision**

In making its decision, the EUB panel will consider all views of the hearing participants and determine what it feels is in the best interest of the parties involved. As a hearing participant, you will receive a copy of the panel's decision, which includes the reasons for its findings.

## PART 4: More Inform



The following publication may be of assistance:

- *Guide 29: EUB Hearings*

This and many other documents about the EUB are available free of charge from:

**EUB Information Services**

640 – 5 Avenue SW

Calgary, Alberta T2P 3G4

Telephone: (403) 297-8190\*

- For an up-to-date catalogue of EUB publications, maps, and services, please browse the EUB Web site at **<http://www.eub.gov.ab.ca>** or contact Information Services (above). To find the document catalogue once you reach the EUB home page, click on the “Access DOCS” button, then click on “Access EUB Documents Now.” Next, log in by clicking “Guest”; then click “Projects.” The Projects page index will give you a list of all EUB document types, such as Acts and Regulations, Decisions, Guides, Reports, News Releases, What’s New, and more.

*\* All Government of Alberta phone numbers referenced here are part of the provincial government’s RITEdirect telephone system. RITEdirect is a toll-free, long-distance service that public callers can use to reach Alberta Government offices. To call toll free, dial 310-0000 and then enter the 7-digit local number to connect or press zero and hold for a RITE operator.*

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